

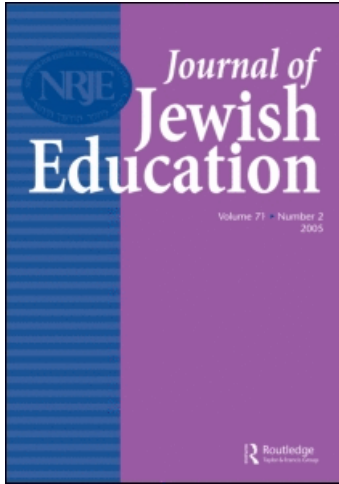
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### TEN YEARS OF ARAB EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

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# TEN YEARS OF ARAB EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

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THE story of ten years of Arab education in Israel is one of achievements and of problems. To the onlooker it is the achievements that stand out, but to those intimately connected with it, it is the number and magnitude of the problems involved which make it significant. These achievements and problems are not only educational but also social and political.

## BEGINNINGS

When the state of Israel was established on May 14, 1948, the school year 1947-8 had still some six weeks to run, but in all the territory under Jewish rule at that time there was not a single Arab school functioning. The Arab population had to a great extent left the towns and villages, and in those towns and villages in which all or some of the Arabs did remain, the schools, whether government or otherwise, had been closed long since. War was at its height, beginning then with the invasion of the country by the armies of the neighboring Arab countries, and naturally nobody could think of reopening the schools for the six weeks remaining in that academic year. By September large tracts of territory were freed, and steps were taken to organize a system of education for the Arab population. The first schools to be opened were in Jaffa and Haifa, later others were opened in villages and mixed towns. The hurried survey made at the time disclosed a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. The age distribution among the children was not normal, due to the haphazard displacement of the Arab population. Only one qualified teacher was found in Jaffa and one in Haifa. On the other hand there was a surplus of teachers in some of the villages where they

had taken refuge. This was true in all parts of the country, although in some sections of Galilee conditions were more normal than elsewhere as regards both teachers and children. Teachers could not be transferred from one part of the country to another owing to war conditions and security restrictions. In addition, furniture and supplies of schools were missing, having been plundered or destroyed in very many cases by warfare or by the troops of the Arab "armies of liberation" which had occupied those parts of the country previously. Furthermore, the majority of the teachers remaining were not qualified: most Arab town teachers during the mandatory regime were usually qualified, but they had left the country, leaving only the village teachers who were not qualified. It is out of these almost chaotic conditions that a system had to be evolved.

## REFORMS

The general plan was naturally to do away with the artificial differences in standard that had existed in Mandate times between the Arab public school system and the Hebrew system. This however, had to be approached gradually; and it had to be done with due consideration to tradition, ways of life and community interests. The syllabus and the books used during the Mandate regime were known to be badly in need of improvement, but the time was obviously not propitious for any changes, not to speak of far reaching reforms; there was simply nobody there to do it. For more than a year there was only one man in charge of the Arab school system and he was naturally more than fully occupied with administrative and security problems, so that no time was left for

planning far reaching changes; nor were the teachers ready, educationally or politically, for any such changes. Nevertheless changes were introduced almost from the beginning, and the process has been going on all the time.

#### KINDERGARTENS

During the Mandate regime the number of kindergarten classes was very limited, only 45 in the whole of the Arab public system in Palestine, and these were attached only to girls' schools. Now there are more than 110 for a much smaller population. At present there is at least one kindergarten class attached to every Arab state school, and in many towns and villages there is more than one class.

Just as in the Jewish system, the Arab kindergarten serves a double purpose; as a stage preparatory to school and as a harbinger of social change to the home. The best Arab kindergartens compare quite favorably with good Jewish kindergartens. But the number of properly qualified Arab kindergarten teachers is very limited, and since the local authorities are not sufficiently alive to the importance of kindergartens, they do not supply them with proper accommodations, furniture and equipment. Without these essentials, it takes an exceedingly good teacher to make a success of the job. Large scale improvement is, however, expected in the near future: young girl teachers are being trained, a small number of itinerant instructors have been appointed and a proper teachers college is to be opened next year.

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Perhaps the elementary school has been revolutionized the most. During the Mandate regime, which lasted some thirty years, the government Arab elementary school was modelled on well established but antiquated British and oriental patterns. The school buildings, where built for the purpose, had spacious rooms but were otherwise austere and devoid of amenities; the walls were usually bare,

except for geographical maps and biological charts where available. The teachers were kept in strict discipline; they were never consulted or gathered in conference, they were not allowed to form a union, they were not allowed to write for the press; the women were not allowed to marry or else they were retired from the service; no effort was made to further their education or broaden their outlook, and, naturally, men and women were kept strictly apart and did not serve on the staff of the same school. As for the pupils, they too were kept under strict discipline; infringement was punished severely, often in the form of caning inflicted by the principal of the school or under his supervision in accordance with carefully laid down rules; they were taught to learn by heart most of their lessons and were not allowed or encouraged to express themselves in their own words; teaching of all subjects in the lower grades was carried out by strictly mechanical methods. As for the books, they hardly ever took the child's interest or understanding into account, and most of them were of an archaic nature. And of course there was no compulsory education; the number of classes opened and of children attending school, was simply in proportion to the budgetary money allowed by the central government for education. Actually, at the best of times 75 per cent of children registered in towns, and 50 per cent of those registered in villages were accepted; the rest were left to roam the streets.

To say that all that has been successfully done away with during the past decade would be vain boasting. To carry out far reaching reforms successfully needs time, money, know-how, and readiness. This article is written just nine years since the first Arab school was opened in the state of Israel. Nine years may be a long period in a well established society, but the Arab population of Israel was certainly not "well established" for a number of years after 1948, and has still not quite found its salva-

tion. However, let us consider the changes made.

The Arab schools opened by the Israeli authorities were from the beginning declared to be municipal, like the Jewish schools, and not government schools of a mandatory regime. The Arab population greeted this change with mixed feelings, since they were told that they would have to bear their local share of the cost of running the schools. They accepted the change but not with a corresponding change of heart. In fact they do not spend enough on their schools even now, but progress is being made in the right direction. The government of Israel now pays all teachers' salaries in elementary state schools, both Jewish and Arab, and expects the local authorities to provide housing, furniture, and other maintenance. The Arab local authorities still show little initiative in providing these services, and the schools are therefore poor in this respect.

The Arab teachers were naturally ignorant of methods other than those to which they had become accustomed during the former regime; so in-service re-orientation courses were started for teachers, and several short courses for young people with rather incomplete secondary education were held for candidates for the teaching profession. These courses paid good dividends, and the beneficial effect of the teachers who passed the courses on their schools were often quite fantastic. The efforts made by the school supervisors, who in the beginning were almost all Jews, and to whom later three Arab colleagues were added, were of a really pioneering nature and at times verged on the superhuman.

The Arab population is usually very eloquent in its demands for education, but is not always ready to accept innovations and reforms, and often, even if willing and otherwise prepared, it is found to be unconsciously opposed to give up ways that have become second nature through centuries of tradition.

#### CO-EDUCATION AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN

One reform, coeducation, came about purely out of convenience. Most of the Arab schools now are mixed, that is co-educational, not because the Jewish schools are co-educational (in fact, not all of them are so), and certainly not because this is the Arab tradition. On the contrary, this was a very unorthodox step to take. It came about simply because at the beginning there were not enough children of the same age groups and achievements, nor enough teachers to make possible the opening of separate schools or even of separate classes for boys and girls. Therefore the first schools to be opened had perforce to be coeducational, and the experiment succeeded so well that it became the rule. It should be stated that given enough women teachers, enough accommodations, and a serious demand on the part of the population, there are no ideological or theoretical reasons to stop separate schools from being opened. The practical unpremeditated reform in co-education was met on the whole with little opposition. The fact remains that even now the number of girls attending school is about half the number of boys attending, though the school-age population is about equally divided between the two sexes. It is true that the number of girls attending non-public, that is Christian church schools is somewhat of a larger proportion, but the total number of girls in all Arab schools is still short by about one half. This is not due to co-education as some would claim, but rather to the fact that among all Arab communities, not only in Israel but also in the Arab countries, girl attendance is very far from satisfactory. Indeed the proportion of girls attending school in Israel compares well with the best in Arab countries. Whatever the proportion of girls attending school in Israel, there is no question but that the innovation in itself was an important step forward in the emancipation of Arab society and especially of Arab

women in Israel. Perhaps no less important a step in that direction is the mixing of staffs, the introduction of women in schools staffed mostly by men. This brought about the emancipation of women in villages, and even in towns, in so far as the Moslem and Druze women are concerned. In addition, the right given to women teachers to marry and bear children without losing their jobs hastened this process of freeing the Arab woman from the shackles of separatism and serfdom.

These two innovations, mixing children and mixing staffs, did not, surprisingly enough, produce any serious problems. It is true that in the very beginning some teachers complained that some boys were making rude signs or using rude language in order to tease the girls, but this was sporadic and short lived. Everybody agrees that the influence of the presence of girls has a salutary effect socially. The same cannot, however, be said quite as categorically about the effect of the presence of girls scholastically. Arab girls tend to be less interested in scholastic distinction than do the boys. Whether the traditionally inferior position of the Arab girl at home and in society has anything to do with this or not, is not easy to say. Some of the Arab girls are very bright and women teachers are not behind their male colleagues. One Moslem village girl has recently graduated from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Perhaps when the full complement of girls will come to attend school the general opinion prevalent about their comparative backwardness may be proved untrue.

#### DISCIPLINE

Corporal punishment is not allowed in the Hebrew schools, and it was therefore prohibited from the beginning in Arab schools under the Israeli regime. This innovation, unlike the others, was beset with difficulties. Though the children did not take undue advantage of their newly acquired freedom, they behaved as chil-

dren do everywhere, whereas they used to be expected to behave like little saints. The difficulty was with the teachers and parents. The teachers had not been trained to know how to deal with situations without recourse to regulated caning or nonregulated slapping or boxing of ears. They therefore felt themselves helpless when to their mind strict disciplinary measures were called for. This naturally made things worse, and in some cases the children took advantage of the teachers' dilemma. With time, however, and knowing the dire consequences to the teacher caught inflicting corporal punishment, a fair balance has been struck in the schools and conditions in this respect are quite satisfactory. The home problem, on the other hand, was more difficult. The Arab home, particularly in the Moslem and Druze communities, but also among the Christians, was and to a great extent still is, patriarchal. The father expects very strict discipline and deferent conduct; every infringement is met with slaps and other forms of obviously understood punishment. The child was thus confronted with a double standard of values, and he naturally resented the one adopted at home and showed his displeasure. The fathers soon began to complain that the school undermines home discipline. Time, the eternal healer, has done its job here too to some extent, and parents are learning to adjust themselves to changing conditions, although here and there one hears whispers about this or that teacher or parent forgetting himself.

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SYLLABUS

The syllabus of the government Arab schools under the Mandate differed considerably from the Jewish syllabus. There were many obstacles to introducing the syllabus of the Hebrew schools in the newly opened Arab schools, mainly because the teachers were not prepared for it, but also because the available Arabic textbooks were different and new textbooks cannot be prepared in a hurry. On

the other hand it was not wise to expect the Arab public schools in Israel to follow a syllabus radically different from that of the Jewish schools. Changes therefore had to be made. In the first place room had to be found for the teaching of Hebrew, which the Arabs themselves wanted to have, even more than the authorities wanted them to have it. The attitude of the Arab population was very practical. If they had to live in a country in which the language of the large majority was Hebrew, then it was in the interests of the Arabs themselves to know that language. In this direction the Arabs are much less touchy about Arabic than the Jews are about Hebrew; probably for the simple reason that the Arabs are naturally quite secure in their own mother tongue, while for a large number of Jews, Hebrew is only a recently acquired language. In addition to Hebrew, room had to be found for such subjects as music, drawing, etc. Since the total number of periods per week in Arab schools had to be made equal to that in Hebrew schools, rearrangements made it necessary to curtail the time allotted to some subjects; those mostly affected were Arabic and English, to which subjects the syllabus under the Mandate had allotted a disproportionately large number of periods. These changes and the subsequent changes in the content of the subject matter of the syllabus, were introduced parallel with the training courses of teachers. In the meantime the Ministry had started revising the syllabus of the Hebrew schools, and the temporary syllabi in the various subjects were translated and adapted into Arabic. They were not published in print but only in mimeographed form. When the new syllabus for Hebrew schools was published in 1955, a translation-adaptation process began; the syllabus in Arabic for grades 1-4 is now being published, and that for grades 5-8 will be published by the end of the year.

The teaching of Hebrew begins in grade 4. In the early years of the new

regime it was done mainly by Jewish teachers, and therefore only in a few schools. This was however soon changed when Arab teachers themselves started learning and teaching Hebrew. Now the language is taught almost exclusively by Arab teachers.

Religion is part of the syllabus in all Arab public schools. Each child is taught his own pattern of religion by teachers of the same creed or denomination. Schools are closed two days in the week, usually Friday and Sunday, if the children and/or teachers are a mixture of Moslems and Christians; Friday and Saturday if they are all or most of them Moslems; Saturday and Sunday if they are all or most of them Christians. Similarly, schools are closed on the respective religious feasts.

#### TEACHER TRAINING

Teacher training in colleges used to be done on a very limited scale by the Mandate government, and was in no way able to supply enough teachers for natural expansion and replacement of unqualified teachers. On the other hand the certification of teachers in service by examination used to be done on a fairly extensive scale, though the numbers of teachers successful in these examinations was small. Thus at the end of the mandate period the number of properly educated or trained teachers was both relatively and absolutely small. As stated above the number of qualified teachers who fell to the lot of Israel was even smaller because the staffs of most towns had left the country. There was no way of opening a regular teachers' college so long as there were no full secondary schools producing graduates. Two short courses were therefore held in 1950 and 1951 for the emergency training of about a hundred young men and women for the teaching profession. The results were very satisfactory as far as they went. In the short time available, the students were given intensive courses not only in educational subjects but also in Arabic,

Hebrew, sciences, crafts and music. They were also taken on intensive observation of Jewish schools. These young teachers laid the foundations of the great changes and reforms, which were planned for the Arab schools. These courses were later followed by in-service training of teachers. About forty teachers at a time were taken out of their schools and given courses of about three months, including educational theory, observation, methods, science, Hebrew, music, etc. Their places were taken by the remaining teachers who volunteered to fill the periods in the hope that their turn would come later to attend a similar course. In this way some four hundred teachers were re-trained. When the time eventually came and the stream of graduates from secondary schools began to flow, it was still not found possible to open a regular teachers' college, because these young people preferred to go into the profession at once without training, at lower salaries as "unqualified teachers", rather than spend another two years studying. The authorities, on the other hand, were so glad to get a supply of teachers who, though not formally trained, were much superior to the material available, that the non-opening of the college was not considered too high a price to pay. It is only now that the pressing needs of schools are being filled, and there remains an overflow of secondary school graduates, that the time seems to be ripe for opening a teachers' college. It is therefore hoped that in the coming school year, 1958-9, such a college will be opened and will attract students. At the same time graduates from the Hebrew university and the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology) are also beginning to emerge and they too, even when not formally trained in pedagogy, will take their place as teachers.

#### TEXTBOOKS

The problem of textbooks was also difficult to tackle. In the first place there was no hard and fast syllabus ready.

But more difficult yet was finding proper and suitable authors. School textbooks should be written by teachers with an active experience in teaching that subject. There were no such teachers with experience in teaching the subjects according to the syllabus and methods wanted. Nevertheless, first steps were taken by some teachers, who at the request of the Ministry, and with its active guidance and assistance, began writing primers in the Arabic language. Here the difficulty of writing primers in literary Arabic for children speaking the vernacular, which is almost a different language, was soon encountered and, we may say, was not solved. The authorities wanted the books to use a certain measure of colloquial Arabic in order to make them understood by the children, but Arabic public opinion was strongly against this desecration of the sanctified, though not necessarily understood, literary and classical language. A compromise of sorts was reached, and the books published in Israel are from this point of view in advance of those used in most Arab countries of the traditional type. However, great progress in the writing of new textbooks was not made, and only a small number, mainly in reading and in science, was published. It is intended to start now on a different path, namely to translate successful Hebrew textbooks used in the Hebrew schools, with a good deal of adaptation to make them otherwise suitable for Arab schools. If all goes well, it may be hoped that by the end of the school year 1958-9, most subjects will be covered by new textbooks in Arabic. These new books will take into consideration not only proper subject matter and modern teaching methods, but also the need to educate the Arab population to be useful citizens. This will be done mainly by introducing into the books a knowledge of the country and of its activities in various directions.

#### SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The number of public secondary

schools is small (five or six) and the number of students attending them is also small, about one thousand in all. This is due mainly to two reasons. In the first place, there are several secondary schools managed by Christian religious bodies, and these provide for a considerable number of Arab pupils. In the second place is the fact that there are very few Arab qualified teachers available for secondary schooling. With the beginning of the flow of Arab graduates from the Hebrew University and the Technion, which has already started but will become more felt during the coming year, the problem of staffing secondary schools will begin to be solved. The future of secondary education for Arabs is only now beginning to take shape. The syllabus of the public secondary schools follows very closely on that of the Hebrew secondary schools. The language of instruction is naturally Arabic. The main difference at the *Bagrut* (school leaving and university entrance) examination taken at the end of grade twelve, is in the four compulsory subjects. In Hebrew schools the four compulsory examinations are in Hebrew, Bible, mathematics and English or French; in Arab schools they are in Arabic, Hebrew, mathematics and English or French. The two additional examinations in selective subjects are the same whether in Hebrew or in Arabic and depend on the branch chosen. The subject matter in all subjects is approximately the same except, naturally, in the Arabic and Hebrew languages. A small number of Arab pupils attend Hebrew secondary schools out of choice.

There are as yet no special vocational agricultural high schools for Arabs, and those Arabs who wish to, are admitted into the special Hebrew high schools. The small demand and the great capital expense involved in establishing such schools, have been the reason for the lack of purely Arab vocational and agricultural schools. It is however intended in time to open such schools.

#### HIGHER EDUCATION

The number of Arab students attending the Hebrew University is at present 75, including three girls. At the Technion in Haifa there are about twenty students.

#### LOYALTY

It may be asked whether the main object in public education, namely the making of useful and loyal citizens, has been achieved. The answer to such a question is obviously not easy to give. In the popular phrase, the proof of the pudding lies in the eating. Real loyalty is proved in times of emergency, and such crises have, thank God, not occurred. The Sinai campaign was fought far away from Arab centres in Israel, and the acid test was therefore not given. Also it must be remembered that the school is only one factor. Two other factors of no less importance are the home and the street, and the work done at school can easily be offset by the influence of the home and the street, which are often under the influence of the bitter propaganda carried on by the radio stations of the surrounding Arab countries. Communism in Israel is not a real force, but whatever there is of it, seems to be concentrated among the Arabs. That does not mean to say of course that the average Arab communist or fellow traveler knows much of anything of Marxist theory, but it does mean that he feels at liberty, and gladly makes full use of this liberty, to deride and abuse the Israel government and all that it stands for. More often than not, Arab communism is merely another word for pan-Arab nationalism, with the consequent hatred for Israel and for the Jews in general. It is obvious therefore that the effort of the school in trying to produce loyal, peaceful and law abiding citizens is made against very heavy odds. Viewed from this angle it can be said, with little reserve, that a great deal has been achieved during the nine or ten years that have passed. Overt acts of disrespect for the state and authority,



which were not uncommon six or seven years ago, are hardly met with now. The children are usually friendly and so are most of the teachers. One can only hope fervently that the future will lead in the same direction.

#### STATISTICS

The following data for Arab public schools in 1957-8 should complete the picture:

#### Schools

Kindergartens 106; elementary schools 116; secondary schools 5.

Teachers in Kindergartens and elementary schools:

Religion	Male	Female	Total
Moslems	315	63	378
Christians	250	168	418
Druzes	48	5	53
Jews	36	26	62
Bahais	1	6	7
Totals	650	268	918

Pupils	Boys	Girls	Total
Kindergarten	2,340	1,657	3,997
Elementary	17,799	8,578	26,377
Secondary	846	96	942
Totals	20,985	10,331	31,316
Moslems	15,532	6,741	22,273
Christians	2,867	2,130	4,997
Druzes	2,586	1,459	4,045
Others	—	1	1
	20,985	10,331	31,316

## EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

(continued from page 8)

demographic factors, faces inevitable expansion. The number of youngsters aged 14-17 will double in Israel within the next five to seven years; even without large further immigration. Coupled with this increase in numbers, post-elementary education in Israel also requires some structural reforms, such as the introduction of the "comprehensive" system, the restoration of agricultural and vocational post-elementary training to the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the establishment of regional secondary institutions for numerous

small new villages which have no secondary educational facilities.

Finally, the efforts to equalize opportunities in schooling for all communities in the country, old settlers and newcomers, immigrants from the West or from the East, Jewish, Moslem and Christian children, must proceed with even greater zeal. Efforts must also be made to instill in the hearts of Jewish children in Israel their living affinity with the Jewish people, and to strengthen the bonds between Israel youth and the world at large.